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THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Thanksgiving time is not favorable to a realization of sacrifice. It is true we do give dinners to the poor, but such generosity is really not a phase of our Thanksgiving philosophy.

If we are at all religious, our hearts are really aglow with thanksgiving for what we have received. The summer is done; the harvest is past, and we are prosperous.

Strange as it may seem, we owe to the Puritan the one festival of our American cycle that centers about the dinner-table.

Far be it from any thoughtful man to try to belittle the meaning of this day. It is a great thing for the nation to be told that it should thank the God of nature and of history, although its thankfulness too often takes the form of overeating. A land blessed like America would be worse than pagan not to give thanks.

But none the less Thanksgiving celebrates *getting*. And getting, even though it be with thanks, is not the characteristic Christian attitude toward life and God.

Thankfulness easily becomes an excuse for selfishness. "Give us," we say to God, "give us great harvests, good health, whatever else we want, and we will be thankful; we will praise thy glorious name forever."

Does not that sound like the voice of Jacob?



Nor is the spirit of getting necessarily economic. There are those who think the chief end of life is to get truth. But a passion to discover truth unhallowed by a desire to give truth to others is spiritual capitalism.

There is something more Christian than knowledge.

That something, says Paul, is love.

And who dares say that Paul was wrong?

"It is more blessed to give than to get," said Jesus. It is far better to thank God for a chance to serve his world than to thank him because the world serves us. One ought to be conscience-stricken if his spirit of thankfulness for things received is not accompanied by a definite attempt to democratize his privileges.

The anchor within the veil is not a dollar-sign or an interrogation mark, but a cross.

We have long since ceased to regard the death of Christ as a mere external act. We see it now as the expression of the final philosophy of life.

The cross is the symbol of the giving principle—the very essence of love.

The ethics of Jesus is addressed to those with privileges. He never exhorts those without privileges to get them. Privileges, he teaches, ought to be shared. So far from fighting for one's rights, one should be ready to surrender them in the interests of love. The kingdom of God is a democracy of privilege. We must *give* justice rather than try to *get* justice.

Jesus never compromised with these fundamental principles. They might kill him but not his confidence in the finality of the give-principle as over the get-principle.



There is revolutionary teaching for you! Men who wish to preach the social teaching of Jesus would do well to weigh this fundamental antithesis.

Shall they urge men to get justice or shall they urge men to give justice? If they choose the former, they may be of great service, but they are not appealing to the essentially Christian principle.

If they choose the latter and urge those who have the good things of life to share them, they will be preaching the real Christian morality. And if only they will show people that this principle should and can be practiced because God is love and Christ is brother and the kingdom of God is a great family, they will be preaching the gospel to a world that needs to be taught to give rather than to get.

That is the message of the cross to men and women with privilege.